

Helpdesk on Apprenticeship & Traineeship Schemes

Frequently Asked Questions

Managing Apprenticeship & Traineeship schemes, evaluation & monitoring

1. Is there a need for indicators and monitoring in schemes? If so why and what good practice examples exist?

The establishment of meaningful indicators and effective monitoring systems can be a key success factor in the ongoing effectiveness and continuous improvement of schemes. Helpdesk experts can provide an overview of the ways in which schemes can be monitored, as well as provide good practice examples.

2. What are the key factors underpinning successful schemes?

Our review of schemes across EU27, together with an analysis of available literature, has identified that there are a wide range of success factors which underpin successful traineeships and apprenticeships.

These success factors are set out, together with good practice examples, in the Guidebook due for release in the summer 2013 and include:

- Robust institutional and regulatory framework
- Strong social partner involvement
- High employer involvement
- Close partnerships between employers and education institutions
- Adequate funding
- Close linkages between schemes and actual labour market needs
- High levels of effective quality assurance
- Processes to match individuals and host companies
- Good balance between theoretical, school-based training with practical work-related activities
- Existence of an apprenticeship/traineeship agreement
- Certification of skills learned and other outcomes

Helpdesk experts can provide further details on schemes featured, or arrange specific advice on each of these features.

3. Why evaluate apprenticeships and traineeships? What are the approaches to consider?

Evaluation of apprenticeships and traineeships is essential in order to ensure their quality and to create a platform for further improvements. There are different perspectives for measuring performance which can be achieved by either process evaluation or impact evaluation. The approach to evaluation should be considered as a learning tool which calls for an adequate evidence-based perspective, in order to support evidence-based policy formulation and implementation.

4. What is meant by impact evaluation for apprenticeships and traineeships? And what are the challenges for this approach?

Impact evaluation is an approach dealing with the quantification of the effects of a policy which would not have occurred without the policy. This means that impact evaluation involves counterfactual analysis: a comparison between what actually happened and what would have happened in the absence of the intervention (counterfactual situation). Being the difference between something observed and something hypothetical, effects can only be inferred and never be directly observed. The main challenges of this approach are related to:

- Methodological complexity relating mainly to the construction of valid counterfactual situation (controlling for the selection bias and other intervening factors; addressing the heterogeneity of results across population groups);
- The need for adequate and accessible data (longitudinal micro-data possibly on conditions before and after the intervention both for beneficiaries and non beneficiaries);
- Timing (it has to be carried out some time after the end of the programme); and
- Cost.

5. What are the benefits of using impact evaluation for apprenticeship and traineeship programmes?

- It provides a rigorous quantification of casual effects (or impacts) and easily interpretable information;
- It is essential for cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness calculations;
- It can assess effects for different population subgroups and net effects (estimating deadweight, substitution and displacement effects);
- It allows the comparison of results among different policies, and for the same policy across areas of application, target groups, periods of time; and
- It provides useful inputs for institutional learning both in terms of policy results and policy design.

6. The issue of adequate and accessible data is one of the challenges of impact evaluation, how can this be minimised?

The challenge of adequate and accessible data can be minimised through better communication and interaction among different datasets and databases. This is particularly crucial for policies promoting apprenticeship and traineeship schemes as they involve a wide range of stakeholders. It often happens that an actor collects series of data that may not be available for the other actors involved in the schemes and/or are collected in different forms/aggregation which makes it difficult to use. In addition, there is the need for better standardization of data to allow comparison within the countries (different schemes can be applied at regional level) and among Member States. Again this is especially crucial in relation to apprenticeship and traineeship schemes that differ widely across Europe.

7. Why is it important to integrate a gender analysis into monitoring and evaluation of traineeships and apprenticeships?

Integrating a gender analysis into monitoring and evaluation is important due to the different gender-based outcomes of apprenticeships and traineeships. For effective monitoring of the impact of an apprenticeship/traineeship scheme on young women and men, all data collected should be disaggregated by sex, in order to observe any differences and specific gender indicators. However, just collecting data disaggregated by sex is not sufficient; action needs to be taken when major discrepancies are experienced.

8. What are the key elements to consider when monitoring and evaluating traineeships and apprenticeship programmes?

- Using the “right” method, asking the correct questions during monitoring and evaluation processes, multi-stage approaches to evaluations and using a mixture of methods and starting with impact analysis before policy implementation;
- Data needs to be “rich and relevant” as well as “complete” and “standardized”. Quantitative and qualitative data are both needed. They have different strengths and weaknesses which need to be appreciated. Qualitative data can help to explain the patterns that can be observed in quantitative data;
- Involving all key stakeholders and encouraging active participation of partners;
- Linking monitoring and evaluation to policy-making mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that evaluation results feed into future policy-making discussions.